

HOUSING TRANSFORMATION AND IMPACT ON RESIDENTS LIFE QUALITY – CASE STUDY OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING ESTATE, IPAJA, LAGOS

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Abstract

Housing transformation is a situation where households carryout far-reaching alterations, extension, modification or addition to the original forms, extent and patterns of their buildings including their immediate environment. This paper investigated the process of housing transformation and its impact on the quality of life of residents. A case study approach was employed and the Federal Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja in Lagos State was purposively selected for the study. The population of study was 1514 housing units spread across four different zones (A-D) of the estate. Sample size of 560 housing units alongside their household heads were randomly selected as units of study. Data was collected by means of structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and logistic regression model. 560 questionnaires were administered out of which 379 were validly returned. Result revealed that housing transformation in public housing is inevitable and carried out irrespective of the socio-economic status and lifestyles of residents. The study identified that spaces prone to transformation are those deemed as unsatisfactory and with dire effect on the quality of life of residents. The paper recommended proper policy guidelines to accommodate flexibility in design of public housing. In addition, adequate manpower should be provided to control and monitor transformational developments in public housing estates.

1. Introduction

Housing according to [1], is not only a shelter but also part of the fabric of the neighbourhood life and of the whole social milieu. Housing is universally acknowledged as one of the most basic human needs, with a profound impact on the life-style, health, happiness as well as productivity of the individual [2]. Economically, it represents a major portion of the family budget or that of an establishment [3]. Housing constitutes the first major capital investment and life ambitions of individuals [4] while the desire to own a house constitutes one of the strongest incentives for savings and capital formation [5]. Housing plays an important role in safeguarding the self-esteem and worth of human existence. In spite of its importance however, inadequacy in supply is evident and prevalent in most developing countries. In Nigeria, the issue of housing supply inadequacy has given rise to calls on the various tiers of government to give greater priority to the inherent housing problems. Relatively, little continues to be done in improving housing supply in comparison with overall needs [6].

To reduce the housing gap, the Federal Government of Nigeria commissioned massive public housing intervention schemes to provide accommodation particularly for the low-income groups beginning from the post-civil war era. These residential apartments designed and built without recourse to the living traditions and lifestyles of the intended users became detrimental. This approach is similar to the gradual replacement of individual houses with residential multifamily complexes and apartments in Iran [7]. The approach focused only on technical aspects, and consequently led to conflict between architectural design and traditional lifestyles.

[7] noted that all spatial characteristics of traditional houses have been lost in this new environment. The consequence of this 'enforced modern lifestyle' is that it thoroughly changed the physical appearance of dwellings, but the living habits and lifestyles of residents have not changed with the same pace. In the Nigerian context, most of the public housing schemes were designed with imported rather than home grown solutions, leading to changes in user requirements particularly with recourse to their life styles and climatic considerations. Thus, it is safe to conclude that dissatisfied users perhaps occupy the public housing estates, an action perhaps responsible for the housing transformation.

It suggests therefore that there is a close connection between compatibility of housing needs of residents and their lifestyles. [7] identified the connections between social needs and the built environment basing her submission on [8], who noted that the external environment which man creates for himself is no more than a reflection of his inner state. The prevailing lifestyle, rooted in socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the society, is embodied in the composite elements of residential units. In addition, [7] identified that drastic change in architecture took place in many developing countries in the early 20th century. Consequently, the traditional architectural style was lost to the modern style. This change occurred so rapidly that it represented replacement rather than adaptation. Thus, local architectural forms, which had responded to the physical and cultural requirements of the people for thousands of years, were neglected completely [9]. As a result, people could not follow their customary patterns of life in the new houses. This negates the notion of housing as described by Mai and Shamsuddin (2007) as a physical manifestation of society's culture, which in itself, is dynamic. The negligence of incorporating the dynamism of traditional lifestyles and socio-economic characteristics of a people is perhaps responsible for the pervasive housing transformation they perpetuate in public housing schemes.

Studies have shown that housing transformation by residents in public housing takes place due to various reasons. For instance, [11] noted that transformation is a response to the failure of the government of the day to cater for the housing needs of the people specifically the low and medium income groups. On the contrary, [12] held the view that housing transformation is a major livelihood strategy among low-income households in urban formal and informal settlements, which is carried out sometimes out of desperation. [13] affirmed that housing transformation promotes the asset base of owner households and the local economy of the settlements. While [14] submitted that transformation resulted out of the urge by one to create a personalized environment and also to share that of others or to follow a fashion. [10] argued that transformation for personalization is more common in developed societies than the developing. They based their argument on affordability and taste differentials of the respective societies. In contrast, [15] observed that housing transformation in most European cities perhaps would be as a result of a task that is driven by objectives for sustainable urban renewal as well as political targets to reduce carbon emissions and fight global climate change. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that housing transformation by residents has to do with the need for creating a personal environment in an attempt to fulfill traditional lifestyles and socio-economic needs. [16] encapsulates the need for fulfillment as indeed the strongest urges of humanity: 'the desire for possession. Something becomes our possession because we make a sign on it before it shows traces of our existence'. Thus, one cannot really identify with an area unless one has made some transformation in the way of construction or alteration and that a sense of belonging can only really be achieved through leaving physical traces. [17] asserted that every house is a work in progress. It begins in the imagination of the people who build it, and it is gradually transformed for better or for worse by the people who occupy it, since their housing need could not be met.

This study is aimed at exploring the impact of housing transformation on the quality of life of residents of Federal Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos State. The study focused on residents of a typical low-income public housing estate. This group constitutes the largest percentage of the population of the country. Reports have it that 70% of 160 million Nigerians belong to the low-income group. Furthermore, this study on the quality of life of the low-income group is useful because they provide the work force for driving the economy of the nation. The results will also guide in developing appropriate housing policies for the design and provision of low-income public housing estates that will conform to the socio-economic characteristics and lifestyles of the target group, which will culminate in reducing the negative effects of housing transformation.

2. Materials and Methods

This study explored the impact of housing transformation on the quality of life of residents of Federal Low-Income Housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos State, Nigeria. The methodology considered appropriate and selected for this research was a combination of the case study and field survey approach. The former approach was adopted because the nature of the research issue is of real life situation while the latter approach was to solicit direct information and feedback from the occupants.

2.1. The Study Area

The study was conducted in the Federal Low-Income Housing Estate located in Ipaja at Alimosho Local Government Area Council, Lagos State, Nigeria. It is the largest and most densely populated of all the low-income public housing initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria during the regime of the second republic President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983). The main objective of the scheme is to make beneficiary low-income earners full homeowners in the nearest future and within the shortest possible period. The construction work for the Federal Low-income Housing Estate located in Ipaja started in 1980. Allocation of the apartments to the target group was through ballot system between 1982 and 1983. Table 1 shows that the Estate is made up of a total number of 1514 (one thousand five hundred and fourteen) housing units spread across four different zones (A - D). It comprises of 1284 units (one thousand two hundred and eighty four) of one-bedroom in rows of 2 in semi-detached bungalows, and 230 units (two hundred and thirty) of three-bedroom in rows of two in semi-detached bungalows.

Table 1: Distribution by Zone, Number, Typology and Sample Size in the different zones. Source: Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ipaja.

S/No	Zone	One Bedroom	Sample size (37%)	Three Bedroom	Sample Size (37%)	Total No of Bedroom	Total Sample Size
1	A	192	67	-		192	48
2	B	688	241	46	12	734	184
3	C	278	97	-		278	69
4	D	126	44	184	46	310	78
Sub-Total		1284	475	230	85	1514	560

2.2. Data Collection

Relevant data collected for this research was through direct observations, interviews, and structured questionnaires. A multistage sampling technique method was adopted in data col-

lection. First, the Federal Low-income housing Estate, Ipaja, Lagos was purposively selected for this study being the most populated and the largest public housing estate. Secondly, the housing typologies were stratified by their Zones within the estate. Finally, for adequate representation, 37% sample size of housing typologies from each zone was randomly selected which gave a total size of five hundred and sixty (560) (see Table 1). The houses and household heads represent the unit of study. A total of 560 questionnaires were thus administered to respondents out of which 379 were validly completed and returned.

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and determinant factors responsible for housing transformation specifically income classification and level of satisfaction with provided spaces. In addition, logit regression model was used to explain the relationship between tenure status of respondents and level of housing transformation within the estate. Finally, inferences were drawn on how housing transformation impacts on the quality of life of residents.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 2. The age range of respondents showed that 59.1% are between 25 and 50 years old. The youthful age of the residents might lend to increase in housing transformation since they are still very active economically and still have prospects of increase in family size.

Table 2: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents. Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Variables	Frequency (N = 379)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
25 - 40	130	34.3
41 - 50	94	24.8
51 - 60	102	26.9
61 - 70	53	14.0
≥ 70	0	0
Gender		
Male	276	72.8
Female	103	27.2
Religion		
Christian	229	60.4
Islam	128	33.8
Atheist	22	5.8
Education		
None	14	3.7
Primary	11	2.9
Secondary	100	26.4
Post-secondary	254	67.0
Average Monthly Income (N)		
≤ 20,000	27	7.2
21,000 - 40,000	82	21.8
41,000 - 60,000	124	32.9
60,000 - 100,000	65	17.2
101,000 - 200,000	77	20.4
≥ 200,000	2	0.5

Majority of respondents were male (276 or 72.8%) which emphasized their dominant role as breadwinners in the African setting. The World Development Report (2012) confirmed the main role for men as the one of primary income-earner and breadwinner in the family. Christian respondents are in the majority (229 or 60.4%). The religion of the respondents is indicative of the type and scope of transformation. For instance, some Muslim respondents transformed their houses to accommodate a mosque to mitigate travelling long distances to communal mosques and for safety purposes. Residents with post-secondary education are in the majority (254 or 67.0%). The high literacy level among respondents suggested that socio-economic status of residents does not reflect the targeted low-income group for the estate. However, the average monthly income of respondents better indicated the socio-economic status of the residents. The result showed that 61.9% of the respondents earn less than N60,000.00 per month. Thus, it can be inferred that the occupants of the estate are still the targeted low-income group whose take home pay is not commensurate with their high literacy level.

3.2. Income Classification of Respondents

A cross tabulation of data was carried out to show relationship between respondents income classification and impact on transformation. The result revealed that all 56 (14.8%) of those who indicated that they were Low-income earners and 245 out of 256 (95.7%) of the middle-income earners have actually transformed their houses. Thirty out of 53 (56.3%) of the high-income earners have also transformed their houses while 14 (3.7%) are not sure. Thus, housing transformation is a phenomenon that cuts across respondents irrespective of their income groups.

3.3. Assessment of Residents' Level of Satisfaction with Provided Spaces and its Impact on their Quality of Life

Table 3 shows respondents' assessment of their level of satisfaction within the indoor and outdoor spaces provided for them. Inferences drawn from the result are based on assumption that unsatisfactory spaces characterized by poor housing conditions and overcrowding may also contribute to the emergence of problem behaviour [19] and will have negative influence on the quality of life of occupants.

Table 3: Assessment of Respondents Level of Satisfaction with Interior Spaces. Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Space	Satisfied	Neutral	Not Satisfied	Total
Living room	115 30.3%	126 33.2%	138 36.5%	379 100%
Dining	66 17.4%	126 33.2%	187 49.4%	379 100%
Kitchen	76 20.1%	144 33.0%	159 41.9	379 100%
Bedrooms	25 6.6%	113 29.8%	241 63.6%	379 100%
Outdoor	298 71.7%	43 11.3%	38 10.0%	379 100%

The living room space is satisfactory for 115 (30.3%), unsatisfactory for 138 (36. 5%) while 126 (33.2%) were indifferent. The relative even distribution of responses indicated that the living room is satisfactory and thus, provided occupants with a good quality of life. On the

other hand, the dining, kitchen and bedroom spaces were unsatisfactory to the respondents. The most unsatisfactory interior space is the bedroom with affirmative response from 241 (63.6%). The bedroom provides privacy needed for quality rest and relaxation. A space that does not meet this basic requirement will have negative impact on quality of life of residents. Therefore, the bedroom was the most transformed space in the housing estate. The study further observed that the extent of transformation is dependent on the tenure status of respondents.

3.2. Relationship between Tenure Status and Extent of Housing Transformation

The study observed that extent of housing transformation is a function of the length and tenure status of respondents. Consequently, the study examined the relationship between these two factors. The chi square tests result showed that there is a significant relationship with average mean of χ^2 183.742, $df = 4$, $p \leq 0.00$. Through a cross tabulation, the result revealed further that most of those who have transformed their houses are owner-occupiers while the least number of those that have transformed are the renting-tenants.

4. Conclusion

Generally, the study identified that housing transformation in public housing is inevitable. The study observed that residents of the estate have engaged in various forms of housing transformation, which is a phenomenon that cuts across irrespective of their status. The study identified that an unsatisfactory space will have adverse effect on the quality of life of occupants, and hence prone to transformation. Thus, housing transformation is inversely proportional to the level of satisfaction within the space. Finally, the study identified that the extent of housing transformation is directly proportional to the tenure status of the resident.

In view of these findings, it is recommended that policy guidelines for future public housing schemes should be tailored towards accommodating the socio-economic status and lifestyles of the intended users. The study identified that while the requirements of each would-be occupant's of public housing cannot be catered for, designs should provide for flexibility that will not negatively impact on the totality of the building even when it is transformed. Adequate manpower must also be provided to control and monitor transformational developments on housing units within such housing schemes.

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